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## PRESS RELEASE

### **Signing of Targeted Investment to Improve Belize's Marine Reserve Network**

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On July 22, 2022, the Ministry of Blue Economy and Civil Aviation (MBECA), the Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) and the Fisheries Department held an investment program award ceremony at the Bacalar Chico Marine Reserve in northern Belize. The ceremony included the signing of a subsidiary agreement between PACT and MBECA for the implementation of year three of PACT's Targeted Investment Program titled "Improving the Management of the Marine Reserve Network," which will be executed by the Belize Fisheries Department.

In October 2019, the Conservation Investment Partnership Agreement was signed for the financing of an approved three-year program in support of the implementation of PACT's Conservation Investment Strategy 2018-2021 and realization of key Conservation Returns on Investments within Belize's Marine Reserve Network, which includes Caye Caulker, Bacalar Chico, Sapodilla Cayes, Glover's Reef and South Water Caye marine reserves.

Valued at a total of \$1,150,000 under PACT's targeted investment, the program has provided tremendous support to improving management effectiveness within the network, especially during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Years one and two of the program have been completed with the agreement for the implementation of year three signed for a total of \$542,275.29. The funds will be used to improve infrastructure and management across the network of marine reserves. The implementation of the final phase of the program is expected to end on December 31, 2023.

Marine reserves are important fisheries management tools but also play a crucial role in biodiversity protection. They protect rare and threatened species, important natural habitats and provide a direct source of food security and livelihood to many Belizeans.

The Ministry of Blue Economy and Civil Aviation extends sincere appreciation to PACT for its continued support in ensuring the proper management of Belize's marine protected areas.

#### **Ends**

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